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ARGOS, IO, AND THE *PROMETHEUS* OF AESCHYLUS

BY JOSEPH CLARK HOPPIN

THE discovery of the poems of Bacchylides, which include an ode to Io (the nineteenth), has opened up a new field for the discussion of the myth, especially with reference to the version followed by Aeschylus in the *Prometheus*. Since the date of the *Prometheus* is intimately connected with this discussion, it seems advisable to consider the myth again with reference to some fresh material. I propose, therefore, to divide this article into two parts: the first, dealing with a vase heretofore unpublished on which a new version of the Io myth occurs, and the second, with the relation of the myth as represented by monuments to the Aeschylean and Bacchylidean versions, — to establish, if possible, the date of the *Prometheus* on a more secure foundation.

I. THE DEATH OF ARGOS ON A RED-FIGURED HYDRIA¹

The red-figured hydria of the Attic 'severe' style on which this scene occurs was formerly in the collection of Sig. Pascale at Santa Maria di Capua, and was acquired by me in 1898. Save for a brief description by Petersen (*Röm. Mitth.*, 1893, p. 328, No. 17), the vase has never been published. It is intact and in perfect condition, both glaze and decoration being of extreme fineness. Though impossible to assign to the hand or atelier of any of the well known Attic vase-painters, it presents a certain affinity to the later style of Brygos, and is probably to be assigned to a date shortly after the Persian wars; later than 470 B.C. it cannot be.

Height, 0.37 m. On rim, tongue pattern. On shoulder, bounded above and below by a black-figured lotos chain, and on either side by a black-figured dotted zig-zag chain (vertical), is the main design. In the centre, Argos to left, nude save for a leopard skin thrown over the left

¹ A brief article on this hydria was read by me at the Archaeological Conference held in New Haven, December 28, 1899. Most of the conclusions there obtained have been embodied in this paper.

shoulder ; sword belt with sword which hangs from the left shoulder to the right arm-pit, and high, striped boots. He is bearded, and wears a fur pilos ; the entire surface of his body is covered with eyes (twelve in number), one showing under the left boot.¹ In his right hand he holds a club, which projects into the upper border, while looking behind him and stretching out his left with a gesture of fear towards Hermes. The latter to left, bearded, and clad in a chlamys which is fastened at the neck by a button, is in the act of drawing his sword from its scabbard. In his hair he wears a wreath, with a petasos hanging over his shoulder. Between him and Argos a Doric column, and behind him an altar ; at the extreme right of the group a female figure to left clad in chiton, himation, and saccos, with earrings and bracelets, holding up both hands in an attitude of astonishment. Her left hand projects into the side border.

To the left of Argos and partially concealed by him is Io in the form of a heifer, galloping wildly to left. In the field below Io and Argos are four small bushes. Facing Io, to right, is a female figure clad in chiton and himation, in her right hand a temple key, in her left a sceptre which projects into the upper border. Her hair is tied up with a band, and she wears a necklace, earrings, and bracelets. Behind her, at the extreme left of the group, a bearded, male figure clad in a himation, with a fillet in his hair, resting his right hand on his hip, his left raised in astonishment. Beneath his left arm-pit a knobbed staff which he uses as a support.

Purple paint is used for the fillets of Hermes and the other male figure, for the bands in the hair of the female figure with the key, for the sword belt of Hermes and the bushes in the field ; dark yellow paint on the leopard skin of Argos, the petasos of Hermes, and the saccos of the right hand female figure.

The identification of Argos, Hermes, and Io is perfectly certain ; the figure on the left with the staff is undoubtedly Zeus ; but the two female figures of the group are open to considerable discussion. That one is

¹ Not visible in the drawing. This was made by Mr. F. Anderson under great difficulties, since being unable to have access to the vase itself, he was obliged to make the drawings from photographs, and those not very satisfactory. The result, however, has been extremely successful, and only in this small detail is the drawing inexact.

Hera and the other a priestess is the most natural explanation, but which of the two figures is Hera is difficult to decide. It would seem at first sight as if the figure beside the altar were the priestess and the other Hera. This is supported by the fact that Hera is more appropriately placed next to Zeus; that the sceptre is her usual attribute, and that the priestess belongs near the altar. Against this it may be urged that the temple key¹ as an attribute of Hera does not, so far as I know, occur on any monument, and that the attitude of the right hand female figure is paralleled by a figure on a black-figured amphora (Col. Bassegio in Rome, Overbeck, *Griechische Kunstmythologie*, I, p. 476, No. 14; Atlas, pl. VII, No. 9) which by an inscription is identified as Hera. On the whole, the bulk of the evidence seems to show that the figure with the key is a priestess, and the right hand figure Hera. This arrangement is not, perhaps, as unsymmetrical as it might seem, as the figures of Zeus and Hera would balance each other at the ends of the group.

As the myth of Io and Argos is so well known,² we may confine our-

¹ Representations of the temple key are by no means unusual in Greek art. A list of the most important monuments is contained in Diels, *Parmenides Lehr-gedichte: Anhang über griechische Thüren und Schlösser*. But invariably the key is represented as an attribute of the priestess. Vases which represent the myth of Iphigeneia among the Taurians (cf. Eurip. *Iph. Taur.* 1463 δαὶ τῆσδε κληδονχεῖν θεῆς; v. *Mon. d. Inst.* VI, 66; *Ann.* 1862, p. 116; *Mon. d. Inst.* II, 43; *Arch. Zeit.* 1849, pl. XII) show this clearly.

Inscriptions perhaps are more reliable. A representation of the key occurs on a grave relief in Athens (*Εθν. Μουσ.* No. 1727; *C. I. A.* II, 2169) of Abryllis, a priestess as proved by *C. I. A.* 1388: ἐπὶ λεπέλας Ἀβρύλλιδος τῆς Μεκλιωνος Κηφισίως θυγατρὸς. According to Milchhoefer, a relief of a priestess in the Museum at Argos (*Athen. Mitth.* IV, 1879, p. 155, No. 507) had represented on it a "sceptre shaped like a poppy" and a temple key. This seems significant, since the relief comes from Argos, with which place the Io myth is most intimately associated, and may perhaps show that the poppy-stalk sceptre (since such the sceptre on the hydria seems to be) as well as the key was an attribute of the priestess. A round stele in Athens (*C. I. A.* III, 1705) also contains a representation of the temple key.

For the above references I am indebted to Miss Susan Braley Franklin of Bryn Mawr.

² For a complete treatment of the Io myth in all its forms, v. Engelmann, *de Ione dissertatio archaeologica*, Halle, 1868; same author in Roscher's *Lexikon*, II, p. 263 ff.; Daremberg-Saglio, *Dict. des Antiq. Grec. et Rom.* III, p. 567; Overbeck, *op. cit.* I, p. 465 ff.; Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*, I, p. 394 ff.; Baumeister, *Denkmäler*, I, p. 751.

selves to that part of the myth only, which deals with the surprise and slaughter of Argos by Hermes and the release of the unhappy Io. The literary conception of the myth will be more thoroughly analysed in the second part of this article; here we have to deal with existing monuments which are earlier than our hydria or contemporaneous with it.

Such monuments are extremely scarce and are confined, in fact, entirely to vase paintings. One plastic representation of the myth, the earliest known, occurred on the Amyclaeon throne (Paus. 3, 18, 9), on which Io was represented as a heifer in the presence of Hera. Speculation as to whether Argos and Hermes were also represented is of course futile, seeing that the monument is lost to us. Of the vase paintings which represent the surprise and slaughter of Argos, five may be cited.

1. Black-figured amphora, Bassegio (Overbeck, *l. c.*). Hermes rushes at Argos with drawn sword; Io is represented as a heifer with Hera standing by in an attitude of astonishment.

2. Chalcidian amphora in Munich (Overbeck, *op. cit.* pl. VII 19). Io as a heifer led away by Hermes; Argos, as a giant, asleep.

3. Red-figured pinax from Chiusi, Hope Collection (Overbeck, *op. cit.* pl. VII 18). Hermes pressing on Argos with drawn sword, Io as a heifer.

4. Red-figured stamnos, Castellani Collection (Overbeck, *op. cit.* pl. VII 10; *Ann.* 1865 tav. d'agg. 1κ). Io (drawn through error on the painter's part as a bull), Hermes with drawn sword about to slay Argos, and Zeus sitting in a chair. In field two palm trees; eyes drawn all over the body of Argos.

5. Red-figured stamnos, Hope Collection (Overbeck, *op. cit.* pl. VII 12). Hermes with drawn sword seizing Argos by the throat, Zeus as a spectator. Eyes all over Argos' body; Io is not represented at all.

Of the five vases cited 1, 2, and 3 (which belongs to the Epiktetan cycle) are clearly older than our hydria; 4, which is in the style of Duris, is probably contemporaneous, or at least only a little earlier, while 5 seems to be of a slightly later date.

An analysis of these monuments shows the following facts: that Io was universally conceived as a heifer (1, 2, 3, and 4); that the conception of Argos as a being with more eyes than those allowed him by

nature was current as early as the sixth century;¹ that either Zeus or Hera were recognised as proper spectators of the scene (1, 4, and 5); lastly from the presence of the palm trees on 4, that the scene took place in a grove, undoubtedly the sacred grove of Hera.² All the monuments unite in showing that Argos met his death by the sword of Hermes and not by a sickle³ or a stone.⁴

The scene on our hydria may be said to be a combination of the five monuments just considered, since the slaughter of Argos by Hermes is here represented, Io is treated as a heifer, Argos is provided with a multitude of eyes, both Zeus and Hera are present at the scene, and the grove is clearly indicated by the presence of the bushes. Two new features, however, are introduced; a priestess takes part in the scene, and the column and altar clearly denote a temple. In a sense these two features, priestess and temple, go together, but the presence of both on the same vase involves a number of rather interesting points.

As we have said the bushes on our hydria and the trees on 4 clearly point to the grove mentioned by Apollodorus. Although the accounts of the situation of the grove vary — Mycenae,⁵ Argos,⁶ Nemea,⁷ even the island of Euboea⁸ being mentioned — the balance of tradition inclines towards a situation in the Argolic plain; if such be the case, in all probability the grove was the sacred temenos of the Argive Heraeum,⁹ a perfectly reasonable conjecture in view of Hera's connection with the myth. It is worthy of remark in view of the tradition which placed the grove in the island of Euboea, that the Argive Heraeum lies on the

¹ Since Argos on 1 is represented as a double-headed monster (the same janiform head is found on an oxybaphon from Ruvo [Overbeck, *op. cit.* pl. VII, 13] belonging to the middle of the fifth century), and on 2 with an additional eye on his breast.

² As in Apollod. 2, 1, 3: οὗτος (i. e. Argos) ἐκ τῆς ἐλαίας ἐδέσμευεν αὐτὴν (Io) ἥτις ἐν τῷ Μυκηναίων ὑπῆρχεν ἄλσει.

³ Ovid, *Metam.* 1, 671-721.

⁴ Apollod. *l. c.*; Schol. Aeschyl. *Prom.* 568.

⁵ Apollod. *l. c.* According to Stephanus of Byzantium Mycenae received its name from the 'mooring' of Io, a derivation differing materially from that of Pausanias (2, 16, 3).

⁶ Aeschyl. *Prom.* 677; Soph. *Electra*, 4; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 16, 239.

⁷ Lucian, *Deor. Dial.* 3; *Etym. Magn.* s. v. ἀφείστος.

⁸ Steph. Byz. v. Ἀβάρρις; *Etym. Magn.* s. v. Εὐβοία; Strabo 10, 445.

⁹ Such at least is the connotation in Soph. *Electra*, 4; v. Jebb, *Electra*, 4 note.

slopes of Mt. Euboea, and a confusion of the mountain and the island in later times is perfectly comprehensible.

Now in addition to the grove, our hydria shows a column and an altar; that they are intended as the symbol of a temple is perfectly evident, and, in view of the numerous similar instances on red-figured vases, requires no further proof. Since one temple only answers the requirements of the tradition in favor of a temple situated near the grove, it is clear that we have here a symbolical representation of the Argive Heraeum. That the vase painter had ever seen the Heraeum or intended to reproduce it with accuracy, no one would claim; but that he was well acquainted with the essential details of the myth and its precise locality, which he here wished to emphasize, seems to me not only possible but extremely probable. There exists no valid reason for refusing to recognize here a symbolical representation of a shrine, which, as the recent American excavations on the site have shown, was at the time this vase was painted one of the most famous shrines of all Greece. Buildings or temples which actually existed in classical times occur constantly on monuments, especially on coins, as a superficial glance at the pages of Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner's *Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias* will readily show. The Parthenon, for instance, is clearly indicated on a vase found in Southern Russia (Miss Harrison, *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, p. 442, fig. 44) which reproduces the scene of the West Pediment of that temple. The omphalos and Apollo temple at Delphi occur constantly on vases which represent the purification of Orestes. In the last case, no one can maintain that an actual reproduction of the object concerned was sought for by the artist; but that he intended to symbolize an actually existing and well known building is self-evident.

That a temple is represented may well account for the presence of the priestess. A passage in the *Supplikes* of Aeschylus, however, leads me to believe that there is a deeper significance in her presence, — a significance closely connected with the myth. At line 297 we read

κληδοῦχον Ἥρας φασι δωμάτων ποτὶ
Ἴω γενέσθαι τῇδ' ἐν Ἀργείᾳ χθονί.¹

¹ Hesychius (*Lex.* p. 380) calls her ἡ πρώτη ἱέρεια τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς; clearly Ἥρας should be read here. Cf. also Apollod. *l. c.*; Schol. Aristid. 2, 3, 8; *Mythogr.* ed. Westermann, p. 324, Ἴω ἡ Ἀρέστωρος ἱερὰτο τῇ Ἥρᾳ.

This would seem to imply that the idea of Io's being a priestess of Hera was known to the vase painter, and that he was endeavoring to represent Io in a dual capacity; not necessarily dual, of course, since we have Io present as a heifer, but undoubtedly her previous connection with the temple of Hera would be an additional reason for representing a priestess as present. The similarity of the treatment of the myth in the *Supplices* to that of our hydria is a significant point, and will be more fully discussed later.

A few other features of the scene on our hydria are important. Both Zeus and Hera are present at this scene, a combination, so far as I know, found on no other vase of the period. Both are present as spectators only, and it may perhaps be urged that as Zeus instigated Hermes to kill Argos, he might more properly be placed on the right of the scene. As a rule, the main figures of any given myth are attended on their respective sides by their several patron divinities. But Hermes being a god requires no such moral support. That a different moment of action is depicted constitutes one of the great differences between our hydria and the other vases; on them we see Hermes, with sword already drawn, seizing Argos by the throat or arm in a firm grasp. Here, however, Hermes is in the act of drawing his sword and has not yet laid violent hands on Argos, who is still at large. The leopard skin is the usual attribute of Argos¹ (we find it on 1 and most of the later monuments), but with the exception of a vase of the Southern Italian style (Overbeck, *op. cit.* pl. VII, 13 and 16), I know of no other case where boots are given him. Argos wears the pilos on 3; he carries a club in Overbeck, *op. cit.* pl. VII, 13 and 16. No other vase painting, so far as I know, represents him with a sword.² The heifer on our hydria is treated in a far more satisfactory manner than on the other vases; the udder and teats are carefully drawn,³ and leave no doubt that the myth was clearly defined in the artist's mind. Only one of the heifer's hind legs is visible, but as the same is true of the horn, careless

¹ Cook (*J. H. S.* XIV, 1894, p. 125, note 250) considers that the skin and the addition of the eyes may signify that Argos, in early times, was regarded as a leopard.

² The sword as an attribute occurs on a Pompeian wall painting; v. Overbeck, *op. cit.* pl. VII, 11.

³ Which is certainly not the case on 3. In the other vases either a bull is represented (as on 4) or the sex of the animal is not indicated at all.

drawing can alone be responsible for the omission. The spirited dash of the wretched animal is clearly represented and suggests the similar figure of the bull on one of the Vaphio cups.

II. THE LITERARY CONCEPTION OF THE IO MYTH DURING THE EARLY FIFTH CENTURY

Having analysed the artistic conception of the Io myth which prevailed in Greece until the time just after the Persian wars, we may now examine the literary evidence and compare the two.

The Io myth in its general form was known to both Homer and Hesiod; at least if we may assume that the epithet *ἀργειφόντης* found so constantly in the Iliad, and, according to Apollodorus (2, 1, 3) in Hesiod as well, refers to the slaying of Argos by Hermes. That such is the case, is, I believe, the view now usually accepted.¹ Further, we learn from the scholiast to Euripides (*Phoen.* 1116) that the cyclic poem Aigimios represented Argos with four eyes, two before and two behind — a conception borne out by two of the vases previously cited. More satisfactory evidence is furnished by the *Supplices* and the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, and the nineteenth ode of Bacchylides; in them we find the myth treated with a good deal of detail, showing even without monumental evidence that the status of the myth as a whole was clearly defined in the Greek mind during the first half of the fifth century. But the treatment of the myth in the *Supplices* and in Bacchylides differs materially from that in the *Prometheus*, and in order to obtain a clear idea of the dates of these works it is necessary to call in the help of monumental evidence.

In the *Supplices* we have perfectly clear evidence that Io was turned into a heifer (303: *βοῦν τὴν γυναῖκα ἔθηκεν Ἀργεία θεός*); that Argos was a creature of many eyes (307: *τὸν πάνθ' ὁρώντα φύλακ' ἐπέστησεν βοῖ*); and that he met his death at the hands of Hermes (309: *Ἄργον, τὸν Ἑρμῆς παῖδα γῆς κατέκτανε*). Bacchylides follows practically the same version; from such expressions as *χρυσέα βοῦς, καλλιέραν δάμαλιν* it is evident that he also conceived Io as a heifer. The manner in which Argos was surprised by Hermes, though treated by Bacchylides at some length, does not concern us. In the *Prometheus*,

¹ v. Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*, I, p. 394 and note 3.

on the other hand, we find that one important change has taken place; Io is no longer represented as a heifer but as a horned maiden (612: *κλύεις φθέγμα τᾶς βούκερω παρθένου*;). That the other details of the myth are unchanged matters little in view of such a radical departure in this one feature from the old order.

The theory has been advanced by Engelmann (*l. c.*) that the earliest instances of the Io myth in Greek art represented her as a heifer, but that owing to the influence of the dramatists, especially Aeschylus, and the introduction of a maiden with horns on her forehead on the stage instead of a heifer, it was the fashion in later art to represent Io as a *βούκερως παρθένος*. That Engelmann's first contention is correct we have seen, since all the monuments earlier than the Persian wars represent Io as a heifer and never as a maiden. That the drama should have represented her as a maiden is of course natural, since it would have been contrary to all the ethics of Greek tragedy to represent a speaking animal on the stage. So far as we know, Aeschylus is the first to make such a change, but it remains to be seen whether the art of the period responded to it. In spite of the fact that Greek art was extremely conservative, it is at least permissible to draw this broad conclusion: that all monuments following the older version of the Io myth are earlier than the Prometheus, while those that represent her as a horned maiden are later. We must now decide whether the chronological division will hold in every case.

Since the excavations of the Acropolis in 1886 and the discovery of a large number of vase fragments, which, from their position, must have been earlier than 480 B.C., Greek ceramic art has received a fixed chronological point, and it is a safe assertion that vases which are later in style than any of the Acropolis fragments must be of a later date. Now of the monuments which we examined in the first half of this article, our hydria, the stamnos from the Castellani Collection, and the oxybaphon from Ruvo are all later in style than the Acropolis vases, the hydria and stamnos being practically contemporaneous, and the oxybaphon of a somewhat later date, perhaps ten or fifteen years. Certainly the date of the latter is not earlier than 470 B.C., while the two former cannot be later. While the hydria and stamnos follow the older version of the myth, the oxybaphon represents Io as a horned maiden. Moreover until the time of the Pompeian wall paintings, no monument

can be found which represents Io in any other way than as a maiden. Clearly then in vase-painting at least such a change takes place somewhere about 470 B.C.

Up to the present time two different dates are assigned to the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus. The earlier date is 478 B.C., since it is assumed that the eruption of Aetna described in the *Prometheus* is that mentioned by Thucydides (3, 116) for which the Parian marble gives us the date. This date is adopted by Gulick for the oldest stratum of the play (*Harvard Studies* X, pp. 110-114). We are not of course considering the question of the present form of the *Prometheus*, which Bethe has shown very plausibly (*Prolegg. z. einer Gesch. d. Theaters*, pp. 159 ff.) has been considerably amended from its original form. The later date, 468 B.C. is that adopted by von Christ (*Sitzungsberichte der Münchener Akademie* 1888, 1, p. 375) who thinks that Aeschylus may have written the *Prometheus* after his return from Sicily. The *Supplices*, which among the other tragedies most concerns us, is regarded by some authorities as the earliest Aeschylean drama though its date is unknown. It may be safely said, however, that Boeckh's date, 461 B.C., is much too late.

Less certain too is the date of the nineteenth ode of Bacchylides, which Kenyon is disposed to date shortly after the Persian wars.

A combination, therefore, of the literary and monumental sources of the Io myth shows us the following: first, an earlier version (Io as a heifer) which is illustrated by the *Supplices*, by the ode of Bacchylides, our hydria and the first four vases of the list cited above; secondly, a later version, illustrated by the *Prometheus*, the red-figured oxybaphon from Ruvo and vases mostly of the Southern Italian style (Overbeck, *op. cit.* pl. VII, 7, 8, 16, and 17). The two groups are sharply defined, and there is practically no point of contact between them.

It may perhaps be urged that this point in itself does not constitute evidence which cannot be refuted; that there is no reason why the *Prometheus* should not have been written even before our hydria was made, since the vase-painters' art was conservative, and that such a radical introduction of a maiden instead of a heifer could not have been generally accepted before contemporary art chose to utilize it generally. I admit this. But, on the other hand, since we are dealing with a question of probabilities, it is singular to find that the two groups

are so sharply defined, and that outwardly at least no point of contact exists. Using the argument *a fortiori*, it is far more natural to follow Engelmann's hypothesis and assume that it was the *Prometheus* which introduced the new theme, and that its effect on contemporary art was fairly rapid. If it could be shown that between our hydria — which we assume to be the latest of the earlier version — and those vases which reflect the new Aeschylean version a space of some two hundred years exists (as would be the case were the only vases which portray the new version of a Southern Italian origin), we might naturally hesitate; but seeing that the oxybaphon is not far removed from our hydria in point of style; that of the later vases just cited, the one in Overbeck VII, 16, may be as early as the beginning of the fourth century; finally, that after the Persian wars representations of mythological scenes on vases are far outnumbered by purely *genre* or secular themes, the theory just advanced for the later origin of the *Prometheus* is not without fairly substantial grounds.

To sum up therefore, the following conclusions seem permissible. As both the ode of Bacchylides and the *Suppliques* follow a version of the Io myth which is seen to be common on vase painting certainly as late as 475 B.C., they are undoubtedly earlier than that date, and the *Suppliques*, in accordance with other internal evidence is the earliest Aeschylean drama which has come down to us. As the *Prometheus*, on the other hand, gives us a treatment of the myth diametrically opposed to the earlier form, which is followed by a vase belonging to a date certainly later than 475 B.C. and by all the later monuments, it can hardly have been written before 475 B.C. I should feel inclined, therefore, to assume that the date adopted by von Christ is the true one, and that the *Prometheus* was composed or publicly performed not much earlier than 468 B.C., — the same year in which the Mycenaeans, with whom Io was so intimately associated, were swallowed up by their envious neighbors, the Argives.